

## REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-7 and 30-36 are presently active. Claims 1, 7, 30, and 36 have been amended by the present amendment. The changes to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 7 was objected to as containing an informality on line 10. Further, Claims 1-7 and 30-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by European Patent Application No. EP 0768582A1 to Ogura (hereinafter "the '582 application").

In response to the objection to Claim 7, Claim 7 has been amended as suggested in the Office Action. Accordingly, the objection to Claim 7 is believed to have been overcome.

Claim 1 is directed to an image forming device management system including: (1) a plurality of image forming devices; (2) a central service station for providing a maintenance service for the image forming devices; and (3) a communication control unit connected to each of the image forming devices by a signal line, the communication control unit connecting one of the image forming devices to the central service station by a communications network. Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that each of the image forming devices is configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit over a predetermined period *through a periodically initiated process* and to display a signal line separation message when the image forming device detects the transmission fault.

Regarding the rejection of Claim 1 as anticipated by the '582 application, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-6) is rendered moot

by the present amendment to Claim 1. The '582 application is directed to an image forming device management system for managing a plurality of image forming apparatuses using an administrating device connected through a communication control unit to the image forming apparatuses. However, the '582 patent fails to disclose image forming devices configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit through a periodically initiated process. Note that the "Transmitted Normally?" inquiries of Figures 21 and 22 of the '582 application are only initiated when either the remote reporting key is pressed or the self-diagnosis process is started. Moreover, the "Report Normally?" inquiries of Figures 21 and 22 are not made unless the reporting data was transmitted normally to the communication control unit, in which case there could not be a transmission fault.

Amended independent Claims 7, 30, and 36 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in amended Claim 1. Accordingly, for the reasons stated above for the patentability of Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claims 7, 30, and 36 (and associated dependent claims) as anticipated by the '582 application are rendered moot by the present amendment to those claims.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-6), Claim 7, Claim 30 (and dependent Claims 31-35), and Claim 36 patentably define over the '582 application.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussions, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. Early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1, 7, 30 and 36 as follows:

1. (Amended) An image forming device management system, comprising

[including]:

a plurality of image forming devices;

a central service station for providing a maintenance service for the image forming devices; and

a communication control unit connected to each of the image forming devices by a signal line, the communication control unit connecting one of the image forming devices to the central service station by a communication network,

each of the image forming devices being configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit over a predetermined period through a periodically initiated process and to display a signal line separation message when the image forming device detects the transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit over the predetermined period.

7. (Amended) An image forming device management system, comprising

[including]:

a plurality of image forming devices;

a central service station for providing a maintenance service for the image forming devices; and

a communication control unit connected to each of the image forming devices by a signal line, the communication control unit connecting one of the image forming devices to the central service station by a communication network,

each of the image forming devices being configured to detect a transmission fault of the communication control unit over a predetermined period through a periodically initiated process and to display a signal line separation message when the image forming device [has] detects the transmission fault from the communication control unit over the predetermined period, and

wherein said display of the signal line separation message indicates a transmission fault along the signal line between the image forming device and the communication control unit.

30. (Amended) An image forming device management system, comprising  
[including]:

a plurality of means for image forming;

maintenance service means provided for the plurality of means for image forming; and

means for communicating and controlling, connected to each of the means for image forming by a signal line, the means for communicating and controlling connecting one of the means for image forming to the maintenance service means by a communication network,

each of the means for image forming being configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the maintenance service means and the means for communicating and controlling over a predetermined period through a periodically initiated process and to display a signal line separation message when the means for image forming detects the transmission

fault from at least one of the maintenance service means and the means for communicating and controlling over the predetermined period.

36. (Amended) A means for image forming management, comprising [including]:  
a plurality of means for image forming;  
maintenance service means provided for the means for image forming; and  
means for communicating and controlling connected to each of the means for image forming by a signal line, the means for communicating and controlling connecting one of the means for image forming to the maintenance service means by a communication network,  
each of the means for image forming being configured to detect a transmission fault from the means for communicating and controlling over a predetermined period through a periodically initiated process and to display a signal line separation message when the means for image forming detects the transmission fault from the means for communicating and controlling over the predetermined period.